

God the only Happiness of Man.

A
SERMON

PREACH'D before the

QUEEN

AT

WHITE-HALL.

March the 20th. 169ⁱ.

PSALM LXXIII. 25.

*Whom have I in Heaven but thee? and there is none
upon Earth that I desire besides thee.*

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L O N D O N.

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P S A L M LXXIII. 25.

Whom have I in Heaven but thee? and there is none upon Earth that I desire besides thee.

THE Design of this *Psalm* is to vindicate the Goodness and Justice of the Divine Providence, notwithstanding the prosperous estate of the wicked and the afflicted condition of good men many times in this World. And in the first place, the *Psal-mist*, whoever he was, whether *David* or *Asaph*, lays down this for a most certain Truth that God is good to good men: *Of a truth God is good to Israel, to such as are of a clean heart, Ver. 1.*

And yet for all this he tells us, that at some times he was under no small temptations to question the truth of this *Principle*, when he beheld the promiscuous dispensation of things here below; that the wicked are often prosperous, and good Men expos'd to great calamities in this life: as if God either neglected Human Affairs, or had a greater kindness for the Workers of Iniquity, than for Pious and good Men: *As for me, my foot had well nigh slipp'd, for I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked, Ver. 2.*

This, he says, was a very great stumbling-block to good Men, and tempted them to doubt of the Providence of God: *Therefore his People return hither, and waters of a full cup are wrung out of them; and they say, Doth God know, and is there knowledge in the most High? v. 10.* This Sentence is somewhat obscurely rendred in our *Translation*, so as to make the sence of it difficult: which is plainly this: *Therefore his people return hither; that is, therefore good Men come to this, in the greatest of their Affliction, and in the bitterness of their Soul, to question God's knowledge and care of Human Affairs.*

Behold,

Behold, say they, these are the ungodly, and yet they are the prosperous in the world, they increase in riches, Ver. 12. To what purpose then is it for any Man to be Religious and Vertuous? Verily I have cleansed my Heart in vain, and washed my Hands in innocency, Ver. 13. In vain have I endeavour'd after Purity of Heart, and Innocency of Life, since so little Good comes of it; nay, to far from that, that I have been in continual Trouble and Affliction: All the day long have I been plagued and chastened every morning, Ver. 14.

Such Thoughts as these often came into his Mind, and gave him great Trouble and Disquiet: But he presently corrects himself: *If I say I will speak thus, I should offend against the generation of thy children, v. 15.* that is, I should go against the Sense of all pious and good Men, who have always believed the Providence of God, notwithstanding this Objection: Which at last he tells us he had raised on purpose to try if he could find the Solution of it: *I thought to know this, which was grievous in mine eyes, Ver. 15.* And then he resolves all into the unsearchable Wisdom of the Divine Providence, which if we fully understood from first to last, we should see good Reason to be satisfied with the Equity of it: *When I go into the Sanctuary of God, then shall I understand the end of these men: How thou didst set them in slippery places, &c. Ver. 17, 18.* This satisfied him, that whenever the secret Design of God's Providence should be unfolded, whether in this World or the other, how strange and cross soever things might seem to be at present, yet in the Issue and Conclusion it would appear, that neither are bad Men so happy, nor good Men so miserable, as at present they seem to be.

So that upon a full Debate of this Matter, the *Psalmist* concludes, that these Objections against Providence, do spring from our Ignorance, and short and imperfect View of things; whereas if we saw the whole Design from beginning to end, it would appear to be very reasonable and regular. *Thus my heart was grieved;*

so foolish was I and ignorant, and as a beast before thee, Ver. 23. And in regard to himself, he tells us, that he saw great Reason to acknowledge God's tender Care over him in particular, and that he could find no Security or Comfort for himself, but in God alone: *Nevertheless I am continually with thee; thou hast holden me by thy right hand, thou shalt guide me with thy Council, and afterwards receive me to Glory, Ver. 16.* As if he had said, I am sensible of thy constant Presence with me, and care of me; and do entirely depend upon thy Guidance and Direction, not doubting but that my present Troubles and Afflictions will have a happy and glorious Issue.

And at last he breaks out into a kind of Exultation and Triumph for the mighty Consolation which he found in the firm Belief of the *Being and Providence* of God, as the great Stay and Support of his Soul in the worst Condition that could befall him; in the Words of the Text, *Whom have I in Heaven but thee? and there is none upon Earth that I desire besides thee.* If a Man were to chuse a Happiness for himself, and were to ransack Heaven and Earth for it, after all his Search and Enquiry he would at last fix upon God as the chief Happiness of Man, and the true and only Rest and Center of our Souls. This then is the plain meaning of the Text, *That nothing in the world but God can make Man happy: Whom have I in Heaven but thee? and there is none upon Earth that I desire besides thee.*

That Man of himself is not sufficient for his own Happiness, is evident upon many Accounts: Because he is liable to so many Evils and Calamities, which he can neither prevent nor remedy; he is full of Wants which he cannot supply; compassed about with Infirmities which he can only complain of, but is not able to redress; He is obnoxious to Dangers which he must always fear, because he can never sufficiently provide against them.

Consider Man by himself, and from under the Conduct and Protection of a superiour and more powerful Being, and he is in a most disconsolate and forlorn Condition: Secure of nothing that he enjoys, and liable to be disappointed of every thing that he hopes for: He is apt to grieve for what he cannot help, and perhaps the justest Cause of his Grief is, that he cannot help it; for if he could, instead of grieving for it, he would help it: He cannot refrain from desiring a great many things which he would fain have, but is never likely to obtain, because they are out of his Power; and it troubles him both that they are so, and that he cannot help his being troubled at it.

Thus man walketh in a vain shew, and disquieteth himself in vain; courting Happiness in a thousand Shapes, and the faster he follows it, the swifter it flies from him. Almost every thing promiseth Happiness to us at a distance, such a Step of Honour, such a Pitch of Estate, such a Fortune or Match for a Child: But when we come nearer to it, either we fall short of it, or it falls short of our Expectation; and it is hard to say which of these is the greatest Disappointment. Our Hopes are usually bigger than Enjoyment can satisfy, and an Evil long fear'd, besides that it may never come, is many times more painful and troublesome than the Evil it self when it comes.

In a word, *Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards*. He comes into the World naked and unarm'd, and from himself more destitute of the natural Means of his Security and Support, than any other Creature whatsoever, as it were on purpose to shew that he is more peculiarly the Care of a Superior Providence: And as Man, of all the Creatures of this lower World, is only made to own and acknowledge a Deity; so God in great Wisdom hath so order'd things, that none of the other Creatures should have so much need of him, and so much reason to acknowledge their necessary Dependance upon him. So that the Words of

David are the very Sense and Voice of Nature, declaring to us that Mankind is born into the World upon Terms of greater Dependance upon the Providence of God than other Creatures: *Thou art he*, says *David* there to God, *that tookest me out of the womb, thou madest me to hope*, or thou didst keep me in safety, *when I was upon my mother's breasts: I was cast upon thee from the womb, thou art my God from my mother's belly: Be not far from me, for trouble is near*, Psal. 22. 9, 10, 11. Trouble is always near to us, and therefore it is happy for us that God is never far from any of us: *For in him we live, and move, and have our being.*

And when we are grown up, we are liable to a great many Mischiefs and Dangers, every Moment of our Lives; and, without the Providence of God, continually insecure, not only of the good things of this Life, but even of Life it self: So that when we come to be Men, we cannot but wonder how ever we arrived at that State, and how we have continued in it so long, considering the infinite Difficulties and Dangers which have continually attended us: That in running the *Gantlope* of a long Life, when so many Hands have been lifted up against us, and so many strokes level'd at us, we have escap'd so free, and with so few Marks and Scars upon us, That when we are besieged with so many Dangers, and so many Arrows of Death are perpetually flying about us, to which we do so many Ways lie open, we should yet hold out *twenty, forty, sixty* years, and some of us perhaps longer, and do still stand at the Mark untouch'd, at least not dangerously wounded by any of them: And considering likewise this fearful and wonderful Frame of a humane Body, this Infinitely complicated Engine; in which, to the due Performance of the several Functions and Offices of Life, so many Strings and Springs, so many Receptacles and Channels are necessary, and all in their right frame and order; and in which, besides the infinite imperceptable and secret ways of mor-

mortality, there are so many sluices and flood-gates to let Death in and Life out, that it is next to a miracle, though we take but little notice of it, that every one of us did not die every day since we were born: I say, considering the nice and curious frame of our Bodies, and the innumerable contingencies and hazards of humane Life, which is set in so slippery a place, that we still continue in the Land of the Living, we cannot ascribe to any thing but the watchful Providence of Almighty God, *who holds our soul in life, and suffers not our foot to be moved.*

To the same merciful Providence of God we owe, that whilst we continue in Life, we have any comfortable Possession and Enjoyment of our selves and of that which makes us Men, I mean our Reason and Understanding: That our Imagination is not let loose upon us, to haunt and torment us with melancholick Freaks and Fears: That we are not deliver'd up to the Horrors of a gloomy and guilty Mind: That every day we do not fall into Frenzy and Distraction, which is next to Wickedness and Vice in the worst Calamity, and saddest Disguise of human Nature: I say, next to Wickedness and Vice which is a wilful Frenzy, a Madness, not from Misfortune but from Choice; whereas the *other* proceeds from natural and necessary Causes, such as are in a great measure out of our Power; so that we are perpetually liable to it, from any secret and sudden Disorder of the Brain, from the Violence of a Disease, or the vehement Transport of any Passion.

Now if things were under no Government, what could hinder so many probable Evils from breaking in upon us, and from treading upon the Heels of one another? like the Calamities of *Job*, when *the hedge which God had set about him and all that he had, was broken down and removed.*

So that if there were no God to take care of us, we could be secure of no sort, no degree of Happiness in
this

this World; no not for one Moment: And there would be no other World for us to be happy in, and to make amends to us for all the Fears and Dangers, all the Troubles and Calamities of this present Life: For God and another World stand and fall together: Without *Him* there can be no Life after this; and if our Hopes of Happiness were only in this Life, Men of all other Beings in this lower World, would certainly be the most miserable.

I cannot say that all the Evils which I have mention'd would happen to all, if the Providence of God did not rule the World; but that every Man would be in danger of them all, and have nothing to support and comfort him against the fear of that Danger. For the Nature of Man, consider'd by it self, is plainly insufficient for its own Happiness; so that we must necessarily look abroad, and seek for it somewhere else: And who can shew us that Good that is equal to all the Wants and Necessities, all the Capacities and Desires, all the Fears and Hopes of humane Nature? Whatsoever can answer all these, must have these following Properties:

First, It must be an All-sufficient Good.

Secondly, It must be Perfect Goodness.

Thirdly, It must be Firm and Unchangeable in it self.

Fourthly, It must be such a Good as none can deprive us of, and take away from us.

Fifthly, It must be Eternal.

Sixthly, It must be able to support and comfort us in every Condition, and under all the Accidents and Adversities of humane Life.

Lastly, It must be such a Good as can give perfect Rest and Tranquility to our Minds.

Nothing that is short of all this can make us Happy: And no Creature, not the whole Creation, can pretend to be all this to us. All these Properties meet only in God, who is the perfect and supreme Good; as I shall endeavour in the following Discourse, more particularly to shew; and consequently, *That God is the only Happiness of Man.*

I. *First*, God is an All-sufficient Good. And this does import *two* things; Wisdom to contrive our Happiness, and Power to effect it; for neither of these without the other is sufficient, and both these in the highest and most eminent Degree are in God.

He is infinitely *Wise* to design and to contrive our Happiness; because he knows what Happiness is, and how to frame us so as to be capable of the Happiness he designs for us; and how to order and dispose all other things so, as that they shall be no Hindrance and Impediment to it.

He perfectly understands all the Possibilities of things, and how to fit Means to any End. He knows all our Wants, and how to supply them; all our Hopes and Desires, and how to satisfy them: He foresees all the Dangers and Evils which threatens us, and knows how to prevent or divert them, if he think fit; or if he permit them to come, how to support us under them, or to deliver us out of them, or to turn them to our greater Benefit and Advantage in the last Issue and Result of things.

His Wisdom cannot be surprised by any Accident which he did not foresee, and which he is not sufficiently provided against. The Wisdom of Men is but short and imperfect, and liable to infinite Errors and Mistakes: In many Cases Men know not what is safest and best for them, nor whether *this* or *that* will conduce most to their Happiness: Nay, it often happens that those very means which the wisest Men chuse for their Security, do prove the Occasions of their Ruin, and they are thrown down by those very ways
whereby

whereby they thought to raise and to establish themselves.

Especially if God breath upon the Councils of Men, how are their Designs blasted? How are they insatuated and foil'd in their deepest Contrivances, and *snared in the work of their own hands*? When it is of the Lord, the Wisdom of the greatest *Politicians* is turned into Foolishness: For *there is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor council against the Lord.*

But the Divine Wisdom being founded upon infinite Knowledge, is thereby secur'd against all Possibility of Error and Mistake. God perfectly knows the Natures and the Powers of all his Creatures, and therefore can never be mistaken in the Use and Application of them to any of his Purposes: So that none of his Designs of Love and Mercy to the Sons of Men can miscarry for want of good Contrivance, or wise Conduct.

And as he is perfectly *wise* to contrive our Happiness, so he is infinitely *powerful* to effect it, and to remove out of the way all the Obstacles and Impediments of it. We may understand many times what would conduce to our Happiness, but may not be able to compass it; but nothing is out of the reach of Omnipotency: Many things are difficult to us, but nothing is too hard for God: Many things are impossible with us, but *with God all things are possible.* For he is the Fountain and Original of all Power, from whom it is deriv'd, and upon whom it depends, and to whom it is perfectly subject and subordinate: He can do all things at once, and in an instant, and with the greatest ease; and no created Power can put any Difficulty in his way, much less make any effectual Resistance; because Omnipotency can check and countermand, and bear down before it all other Powers.

So that if God be on our side, who can be against us? We may safely *commit our Souls into his hands, for he is able to keep that which is committed to him.* He can give us of all good things, and deliver us from all evil,

evil, for *his is the Kingdom and the glorious Power*. Tho' all Creatures should fail us, we may rely upon God, and live upon his All-sufficiency for our Supply; and may say with the Prophet, *Tho' the Fig-tree should not blossom, neither Fruit be in the Vine; tho' the labour of the Olive should fail, and the Fields should yield no meat; tho' the Flock should be cut off from the Fold, and there should be no Herd in the Stalls; yet would I rejoyce in the Lord, and joy in the God of my Salvation.*

II. Secondly, As God is an All-sufficient Good, so he is perfect Goodness. He is willing to communicate Happiness to us, and to employ his Power and Wisdom for our Good. He made us that he might make us happy, and nothing can hinder us from being so but our selves. Such is his Goodness, that *he would have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth*: And when we have provoked him by our Sins, *he is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance*: For *he delighteth not in the death of a Sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live*. So that if any of us be miserable, it is our own Choice; if we perish our Destruction is of our selves: For as the *Wise-men*, in one of the *Apocryphal* Books, says excellently, *God made not death, neither hath he pleasure in the destruction of the living: But men seek death in the error of their life, and pull destruction upon themselves, with the works of their own hands.*

So great is the Goodness of God to Mankind, that he hath omitted nothing that is necessary to our Happiness. He design'd it for us at first, and to that End he hath endowed us with Powers and Faculties whereby we are capable of knowing, and loving, and obeying, and enjoying *him* the chief Good. And when we had forfeited all this by the wilful Transgression and Disobedience of the first Parents of Mankind, and were miserably bruised and maimed by their Fall,
 God

God of his infinite Mercy was pleased to restore us to a new Capacity of Happiness, by sending his only Son to suffer in our Nature, and in our stead, and thereby to become *a Propitiation for the sins of the whole World, and the Author of eternal Salvation to them that believe and obey him*: And he hath likewise promised to give us his Holy Spirit to enable us to that Faith and Obedience which the Gospel requires of us, as the necessary Conditions of our eternal Salvation.

III. *Thirdly*, God is also a firm and unchangeable Good. Notwithstanding his infinite Wisdom, and Power, and Goodness, we might be miserable if God were mutable. For that cannot be a Happiness which depends upon Uncertainties, and perhaps one of the greatest Aggravations of Misery is to fall from Happiness, to have been once Happy and afterwards cease to be so: And that would unavoidably happen to us, if the Cause of our Happiness could change, and the Foundation of it be removed. If God could be otherwise than Powerful, and Wise, and Good, all our Hopes of Happiness would be shaken, and would fall to the Ground. But the Divine Nature is not subject to any Change: As he is *the Father of Lights, and the Author of every good and perfect Gift, so with him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning*. All the things of this World are mutable, and for that reason had they no other Imperfection belonging to them, cannot make us happy.

IV. *Fourthly*, God is such a Good as none can deprive us of and take away from us. If the things of this World were unchangeable in their Nature, and not liable to any decay, yet they cannot make us Happy; because we may be cheated of them by Fraud, or robb'd of them by Violence: But God cannot be taken from us. Nothing but our Sins can part God and us: *Who shall separate us, saith the Apostle, from the love of God?*
shall

shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Rom. 8. 35 We may be stripp'd of all our worldly Comforts and Enjoyments, by the Violence of Men; but none of all these can separate us from God: I am perswaded, as the Apostle goes on with great triumph, that neither death nor life; nor Angels, nor Principalities, nor Powers; nor height, nor depth, noe things present, nor things to come, nor any other Creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord: Nor any other Creature. Here is a sufficient Induction of Particulars, and nothing left out of this Catalogue but one, and that is Sin, which is none of God's Creatures, but our own: This indeed deliberately consented to, and wilfully continued in, will finally part God and us, and for ever hinder us from being happy.

But if we be careful to avoid this, which only can separate between God and us, nothing can deprive us of him: The Aids and Influences of his Grace none can intercept and hinder; the Joys and Comforts of his Holy Spirit none can take from us: All other things may leave us and forsake us: We may be debarr'd of our best Friends, and banish'd from all our Acquaintance; but Men can send us no whither from the Presence of God: Our Communication with Heaven cannot be prevented or interrupted. Our Prayers and our Souls will always find the way thither from the utmost parts of the Earth.

V. *Fifthly*, God is an eternal God: And nothing but what is so can make us happy. Man having an immortal Spirit, and being design'd for an endless Duration, must have a Happiness proportionable: For which reason nothing in this World can make us Happy, because we shall abide and remain after it: When a very few Years are past and gone, and much sooner for any thing we know, all the things of this World will leave us, or else we shall be taken away from

from them, *But God is from everlasting to everlasting : He is the same, and his years fail not : Therefore well might David fix his Happiness upon God alone, and say, Whom have I in Heaven but thee and there is none upon Earth that I desire besides thee : When my heart faileth and my strength faileth, God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever.*

VI. *Sixtly*, God is able to support and comfort us in every Condition, and under all the Accidents and Adversities of humane Life. Outward Afflictions may hurt our Body, but they cannot reach our Soul; and so long as *that remains unwounded, the spirit of a Man can bare his infirmities.* God is intimate to our Souls, and hath secret ways whereby to convey the Joys and Comforts of his Holy Spirit into our Hearts, under the bitterest Afflictions and sharpest Sufferings: He can enable us by his Grace to *possess our Souls in patience*, when all other things are taken from us: When there is nothing but trouble about us, He can *give us peace and joy in believing*: When we are *persecuted, afflicted, and tormented*; He can give us that ravishing Sight of the Glories of another World, that stedfast Assurance of a future Blessedness, as shall quite extinguish all Sense of present Sufferings: How did many of the primitive *Christian Martyrs*, in the midst of their Torments, and under the very Pangs of Death *rejoyce in the hope of the glory of God.*

There are none of us but happen to fall into those Circumstances of Danger, and of Bodily Pains and Sufferings, as to have no hopes of Relief, and Comfort but from God; none in all the World to trust to but *Him* only. And in the greatest Evils that can befall us in this Life, He is a sure Refuge and Sanctuary; and to repeat the Words of the Psalmist after the Text, *When our heart fails, and our strength fails, God is the strength of our hearts, and our portion for ever.*

Now

Now what would any of us do in such a Case, if it were not for God? Humane Nature is liable to desperate Straits and Exigencies: And he is not happy who is not provided against the worst that may happen. It is said to be reduced to such a Condition, as to be destitute of all Comforts and Hopes: And yet Men may be brought to that extremity, that if it were not for God, they would not know which way to turn themselves, or how to entertain their Thoughts with any comfortable Considerations under their present Anguish.

All Men naturally resort to God in extremity, and cry out to him for Help: Even the most Profane and Atheistical, when they are destitute of all other Comfort, will run to God and take hold of him, and cling about him. But *God hath no pleasure in fools*; in those who neglect and despise him in their Prosperity, tho' they owe that also entirely to him; but when the evil Day comes, then they lay hold of him as their only Refuge: When all things go well with them, *God is not in all their thoughts*; but *in their affliction they will seek him early*: Then they will cry, Lord, Lord; but he will say to them in that day, *Depart from me ye workers of iniquity, for I know you not.*

Here will be the great Unhappiness of such Persons: that God will then appear terrible to them, so as they shall not be able, when they look up to him, to abide his Frowns: And at the same time that they are forced to acknowledge him, and to supplicate to him for Mercy and Forgiveness, they shall be ready to despair of it: Then those terrible threatnings of God's Word will come to their Minds: *Because I called, and ye refused; I stretched out my hand, and no man regarded: But ye set at nought all my council, and would have none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you: Then shall they call upon me, but I will*

not answer ; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me : For that they hated knowledge, and did not chuse the fear of the Lord : They would none of my council, they despised all my reproof : Therefore shall they eat the fruit of their own ways, and be filled with their own devices : The ease of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them, Prov. 1. 24, 25, &c. To which I will add that terrible Passage in the Prophet, concerning the perverse and obstinate Jews, *They are a People of no understanding, therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will shew them no favour,* Isa. 27 11 And Men are miserable Creatures indeed, when God their *Maker* doth abandon them, and hath so far hardned his Heart against them, that he can have no Pity and Compassion for them.

Seventhly and Lastly, Which is consequent upon all the rest, God is such a Good as can give perfect Rest and Tranquility to our Minds. And that which cannot do this, tho' it had all the Properties before mentioned, cannot make us happy. For he is not happy who does not think himself so, whatever Cause he may have to think so. Now what in Reason can give us disquiet, if we do firmly believe that there is a God, and that his Providence rules and governs all things for the best ; and that God is all that to good Men which hath now been said of him : Why should not our Minds be in perfect repose, when we are secure of the chief Good, and have found out that which can make us happy, and is willing to make us so, if we be not wanting to our selves, and by our wilful Obstinacy and Rebellion against him, do not oppose and frustrate this Design ?

If a considerate Man were permitted to his own Choice, to wish the greatest Good to himself that he could possibly devise ; after he had searched Heaven and Earth, the result of all his Wishes would be, that there were just such a Being as we must necessarily conceive

ceive God to be: Nor would he chuse any other Friend or Benefactor, any other Protector for himself, or Governour for the whole World, than infinite Power conducted and managed by infinite Wisdom and Goodness; which is the true Notion of a God: After all his Enquiry he would come to the Psalmist's Conclusion here in the Text, *Whom have I in Heaven but thee? and there is none upon Earth that I desire besides thee.*

Vain Man is apt to seek for Happiness elsewhere, but this proceeds from want of due Consideration: For when all things are well weigh'd, and all Accounts rightly cast up and adjusted, we shall at last settle in David's Resolution of that great Question, *What is the chief Good of Man?* there be many, says he, that say, *Who will shew us any good?* *Psalm 4. 6, 7, 8.* That is, Men are generally inquisitive after Happiness, but greatly divided in their Opinions about it: Most Men place it in the present Enjoyments of this World, but David for his part pitches upon God; in whom he was fully convinc'd that the Happiness of Man does consist: *There be many that say, who will shew us any good? Lord, lift up the light of thy countenance upon us: Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and wine increased.* The great Joy of the Men of this World is in a plentiful Harvest, and the abundance of the good things of this Life: But David had found that which gave more Joy and Gladness to his Heart, the Favour of God and the *light of his countenance*: This gave perfect Rest and Tranquillity to his Mind, so that he needed not to enquire any further: For so it follows in the next words, *I will both lay me down in peace, and rest; for thou Lord only makest me to dwell in safety:* The Hebrew Word signifies Confidence or Security: Here, and no where else, his Mind found Rest, and was in perfect Ease and Security.

I shall now only make two or three Inferences from this Discourse, and so conclude:

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First,

First, This plainly shews us the great Unreasonableness and Folly of *Atheism*, which would banish the Belief of God and his Providence out of the World: Which as it is most impious in respect of God, so it is most malicious to Men; because it strikes at the very Foundation of our Happiness, and perfectly undermines it. For if there were no God, Man would evidently be the most unhappy of all other Beings here below; because his Unhappiness would be laid in the very Frame of his Nature, in that which distinguishes him from all other Beings below him, I mean in his Reason and Understanding: And he would be so much more miserable than the Beasts, by how much he hath a farther reach, and a larger prospect of future Evils; a quicker Apprehension, and a deeper and more lasting Resentment of them.

So that if any Man could see Reason to stagger his Belief of a God, or of his Providence, as I am sure there is infinite Reason to the contrary; yet the belief of these things is so much for the Interest, and Comfort, and Happiness of Mankind, that a wise Man would be heartily troubled to part with a Principle so favourable to his quiet, and that does so exactly answer all the natural Desires, and Hopes and Fears of Men, and is so equally calculated both for our Comfort in this World, and for our Happiness in the other. For when a Man's Thoughts have ranged and wandred as far as they can, his Mind can find no Rest, no probable Foundation of Happiness but God only; no other reasonable, no nor tolerable *Hypothesis* and *Scheme* of things for a Wise Man to rely upon, and to live and die by. For no other Principle but this, firmly believed, and truly lived up to by an answerable Practice, was ever able to support the generality of Mankind, and to minister true Consolation to them under the Calamities of Life, and the Pangs of Death.

And if there were not something real in the Principles of Religion, it is impossible that they should have
so

so remarkable and so regular an Effect to support our Minds in every Condition, upon so great a Number of Persons of different degrees of Understanding, of all Ranks and Conditions, young and old, learned and unlearned, in so many distant Places, and in all Ages of the World, the Records whereof are come down to us: I say so real and so frequent, and so regular an Effect as this is, cannot with any Colour of Reason be ascribed either to blind Chance, or meer Imagination, but must have a real, and regular, and uniform Cause proportionable to so great and general an Effect.

I remember that *Grotius*, in his excellent *Book of the Truth of the Christian Religion*, hath this Observation, That God did not intend that the Principles of Religion should have the utmost Evidence that any thing is capable of, and such as is sufficient to answer and bear down all sorts of captious Cavills and Objections against it; but so much as is abundantly sufficient to satisfy a sober and impartial Enquirer after Truth, one that hath no other Interest but to find out Truth; and when he hath found it, to yield to it: If it were otherwise, and the Principles of Religion were as glaring and evident as the Sun shining at Noon-day, as there could hardly be any Vertue in such a Faith, so Infidelity would be next to an Impossibility.

All that I would expect from any Man, that shall say that he cannot see sufficient Reason to believe the *Being* and the *Providence* of God, is this, That he would offer some other *Principles*; that he would advance any other *Hypothesis* and *Scheme* of things that is more agreeable to the common and natural Notions of Men, and to all Appearances of things in the World; and that does bid more fairly for the Comfort and Happiness of Mankind, than these Principles of the *Being* of a God, and of his watchful *Providence* over the Children of Men, do plainly do: and till this be clearly done, the Principles of Religion which have generally been received by Mankind, and have obtain'd in the World in

all Ages, cannot fairly be discarded; and ought not to be disturbed and put out of possession. And this, I think, puts the whole matter upon a very fair and reasonable Issue, and that nothing more needs to be said concerning it.

Secondly, From what hath been said, in the foregoing Discourse, it naturally follows, That God is the only Object of our Trust and Confidence, and therefore to him alone, and to no other, we ought to address all our Prayers and Supplications *for mercy and grace to help in time of need.* But now, according to the Doctrine and Practice of the Church of Rome, the *Psalmist* here puts a very odd and strange Question, *Whom have I in Heaven but thee?* To which they must give a quite different Answer from what the *Psalmist* plainly intended; namely, That God was the sole Object of his Hope and Trust, and that upon him alone he relied as his only Comfort and Happiness: But to this Assertion of the *Psalmist* the Church of Rome can by no means agree: They understand this matter much better than the *Psalmist* did; namely, that besides God there are in Heaven innumerable *Angels* and *Saints*, in whom we are to repose great Trust and Confidence, and to whom also we are to address solemn Prayers and Supplications; not only for temporal good things, but for the Pardon of our Sins, for the Increase of our Graces, and for Eternal Life: That there are in Heaven particular *Advocates* and *Patrons* for all Exigencies and Occasions, against all sorts of Dangers and Diseases, for all Graces and Vertues, and in a Word, for all temporal, spiritual and eternal Blessings; to whom we may apply our selves, without troubling God and our Blessed Saviour, who also is *God blessed for evermore*; by presuming upon every Occasion to make our immediate Addresses to him: For as they would make us believe, tho' *Abraham* was ignorant of it, and *David* knew it not, the blessed Spirit above, both *Angels* and *Saints*, do not only intercede with God for us, for
all

all sorts of Blessings, but we may make and direct immediate Addresses to them to bestow these Blessings upon us: for so they do in the Church of *Rome*, as is evident, beyond all denial, from several of their *Prayers* in their most publick and authentick *Liturgies*.

They would indeed fain palliate this matter, by telling us, that by these direct and immediate Addresses to Angels and Saints to bestow Grace and eternal Life upon them, they mean no more but only to pray to them that they would be pleased to intercede with God for these Blessings to be bestowed upon them by their Mediation: But if they mean no more, why do they say more than they mean? Why do they use such Expressions as to the common Sense and Understanding of Mankind do signify a great deal more than they say they mean; such Expressions as they themselves do acknowledge, if they be understood according to the most obvious Sense of the Words, would render them guilty of flat Idolatry? Especially when they know, that they are charged with Idolatry upon this account; and since to clear themselves of it they will not alter their Prayers, they justly lie under the Suspicion of it.

And yet admitting what they say in this Matter to be true, and that by these Expressions in their *Prayers* they intended no more but the solemn Invocation of Angels and Saints, that they would intercede with God to bestow these Blessings upon them for the sake of their Merits, and upon their Mediation: yet this surely is a great deal too much, and cannot be done without a high Entrenchment upon the Office of the only Mediator between God and Man, the Man Christ Jesus: But let them not deceive themselves, *God is not mocked: The Lord our God is a jealous God, and He will not give his Glory to another.*

I have not yet instanced in the grossest part of their *Superstition*, not to say down-right Idolatry in this kind; I mean, in their extravagant Worship of the blessed Vir-

gin and *Mother of our Lord*, whom they blasphemously call the *Queen of Heaven*; and whom, by a new Style, unknown to the *Scriptures* and *Primitive Antiquity*, they think to dignify with the *modish* Title of *our Lady*, as if that could be any Addition of Honour to *Her*, whom the *Angel* declared to be *blessed among Women*: Who, if she knew any thing of the Follies of her Worshippers here below, with what Disdain and Indignation, do we think she hears those infinite *Prayers* that are made to her, and that *Sacrilegious* Worship which is given her in that Church, and which makes both Pages of their Religion; and which for the Frequency of it, both in their Publick and Private Devotions, is very much beyond what they give to God and Christ? As if there were *none in Heaven but she*, nor *any thing upon Earth* to be worshipped in Comparison of *her Image*.

Nay, so far have they carried this extravagant Folly, and how much farther they would have carried it, had not the *Reformation* given a check to it, God only knows: so far, I say, have they proceeded in this Folly, as, in that famous *Book* of their *Devotions*, call'd *Our Lady's Psalter*, not only to apply to her some part of this *Psalms*, out of which I have taken my *Text*, beginning it thus: *How good is God to Israel, to them that worship his Blessed Mother*. But they have likewise profanely *burlesqued*, I cannot afford it a better Term, this whole *Book* of *Psalms*, applying to *her* almost the highest things that are there said concerning God and our *Blessed Saviour*, *Hear, O Heavens, and give ear, O Earth, and be ye horribly astonished*, to see the best and wisest Religion in the World transform'd into Superstition and Folly, and to see the most learned Persons in that Communion set themselves in good earnest to justify all these Follies and Absurdities by a grave and groundless Pretence to *Infallibility*.

Thirdly, and Lastly, This shews us how necessary the Favour of God is to every Man's Happiness: and there is but one way to gain his Friendship and Favour, by be-

becoming Holy and Good as he is: then may we re-joyce and glory in God, as the *Psalmist* here does, and say, *Whom have I in Heaven but thee? and there is none upon Earth that I desire besides thee.* A Wicked Man dreads God above all things in the World, and he has great Reason to do so: For he is not a God that hath Pleasure in wickedness, neither shall evil dwell with him: The foolish shall not stand in his sight, he hateth all the Workers of iniquity. When by Sin we depart from God, we forsake our own Happiness: Salvation is far from the wicked, says David. And again, a little after the Text, *They that are far from thee shall perish, but it is Good for me to draw near to God,* Psal. 119. Now by Holiness and Goodness we draw near to Him, who alone can make us Happy.

It is certainly the common Interest of Mankind there should be a God, because we cannot possibly be Happy without him: But then it is no Man's Interest to be wicked, because thereby we make him our Enemy in whose favour is life, and upon whom all our Hopes of Happiness do depend.

To conclude, if we would have God for our Happiness, we must be sure to make him our Friend; and then we may promise to our selves all those Advantages which the Friendship of so great and powerful a Patron can give us: And there is but one way to establish a firm Friendship between God and us, and that is, by doing his Will, and living in Obedience to his Laws: *Ye are my Friends,* saith our Blessed Lord, *if you do whatsoever I command you: This is the love of God,* saith St. John, *that we keep his Commandments:* And to love God is the way to be made Partakers of these glorious things which God hath prepared for them that love him: *Such as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man:* Which God of his infinite Goodness grant we may all at last be made Partakers of, for his Mercy's sake in Jesus Christ: To whom with thee, O Father and the Holy Ghost, be all Honour and Glory, Dominion and Power, both now and for ever, Amen.

F I N I S.

(12)

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